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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

ERIC WYNN BUTTERWORTH

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

PAINTING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

WINTER 1998



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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

submitted by ERIC WYNN BUTTERWORTH in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art.

The University of Alberta

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR ERIC WYNN BUTTERWORTH TITLE OF
THESIS FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION DEGREE FOR
WHICH THESIS WAS GRANTED MASTER OF FINE ARTS
YEAR THIS DEGREE WAS GRANTED 1998

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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections,
University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
Deconstruction	1997/98	Acrylic/Charcoal on canvas	132 x 160 cm

Insurance Value = \$900.00

Artist Statement

My work deals with language and influence. Language is a powerful expressive form of communication and represents a major influence on our daily lives and culture. Working within the realm of the visual arts it has become apparent to me that despite the expectation of a visual aesthetic experience when viewing art works there is surrounding these works, particularly historical art, a tremendous amount of written and verbal language that is ever present, desired and expected. Within many institutional venues, the art work is presented with text in the form of tour guides, audio tapes, catalogues, or printed side panels explaining the 'meaning' and/or context of the image. In one sense this takes on the role of educating the viewer, in another sense it is influence.

My work derives from paintings considered to be canons of art history. The process began with one painting 'no 178' - when it was completed I found this painting very hard to accept - it raised the question of what can a painting be? I realized then my lack of acceptance came from influence and that visual images/objects have a tremendous subversive potential. I wished to examine this influence and the route I selected was translating canonical paintings from several periods. Art canons are those masterpiece paintings that support the "epic enterprise known as the progress of western art". During the last ten years I have viewed all the works presented in this venue in their institutional settings (Diary of a Traveller) . The artists and their paintings are well known. All of the paintings arise from a cultural tradition that attributes illusion to reality.

All of the works that derive from the canons of western art have accompanying side panels. The side panels include the original image, my thoughts and memories of viewing these works and a quote about the work or artist. Within the works themselves I have introduced text as writing as drawing. The words are a direct analogy to the text that surrounds art works in our culture. Simple recognition of the image (= sign as index or symbol) informs the viewer of an institutional influence. There are several paintings within the venue, however, that do not have accompanying side panel text - in these works the text - writing as drawing, writing as signature - is in the painting along with 'signs' taken from the paintings presented in another more recognizable form - a shift in influence.

One last comment, the use of historical images is appropriation. Using the image in a way that alters the intended meaning (which may be lost or unknown) is allegorical. Because the supposed original meaning of an image is altered, allegorical painting is considered subversive and has historically been condemned as the antithesis of institutional art or an aesthetic aberration. At this point in the process I have come to agree with Herbert Marcuse - the aesthetic form is potentially the most subversive form of art.

E. W. Butterworth

February 17, 1998

A way can be a guide, but not a fixed path;
names can be given, but not permanent labels.
Nonbeing is called the beginning of heaven and earth;
being is called the mother of all things.
Always passionless, thereby observe the subtle;
ever intent, thereby observe the apparent.
These two come from the same source but differ in
name;
both are considered mysteries.
The mystery of mysteries
is the gateway of marvels.

From Tao Te Ching

Slide List

Thesis Title: Living with Contradictions: Influence in the Sign. Eric Wynn Butterworth

No	Title	Size Ht X W (cm)	Media	Date
1	Rationalism after Vermeer	135 x 152	acrylic, charcoal on canvas	1996/97
2	Quest	132 x 165	acrylic, charcoal on canvas	1997
3	The Last Word after Degas	132 x 160	acrylic, charcoal on canvas	1996/97
4	Deconstruction	132 x 160	acrylic on canvas	1997/98
5	No 178 after Manet	135 x 165	acrylic, charcoal on canvas	1996
6	The Gaze after Manet	109 x 165	acrylic, charcoal on canvas	1997
7	A Sense of Taste after Velazquez	105 x 139	acrylic, charcoal on canvas	1997
8	The Game after Cezanne	130 X 160	acrylic, charcoal on canvas	1997
9	The Last Red Table	123 x 168	acrylic on canvas	1997
10	Preconceived after van Eyck	156 x 127	acrylic and charcoal on canvas	1997
11	Death of A Sailor after Picasso	171 x 133	acrylic and charcoal on canvas	1997/98
12	The Laughing Skull	149 x 172	Charcoal, conte on paper	1997
13	Influence	149 x 149	Charcoal, pastel on paper	1997

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